

CLAIMS

1. A method of controlling an allocation of priority to TCP packets within a switch, comprising the steps of:

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- a) determining whether the packet is a control packet;
- b) assigning priority to control packets that is different to the priority of the data packets that they control.

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2. A method according to claim 1 in which the step of determining whether the packet is a control packet comprises checking flag bits within the TCP header and establishing if any flag other than the PSH flag bit is set.

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3. A method according to claim 2 in which packets having a flag bit other than PSH set are assigned an increased priority relative to those with the PSH flag bit set.

4. A switch including:

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logic for snooping a TCP header in a packet and establishing whether said packet is a control packet; and

means for assigning a priority to said packet dependent on whether it is a control packet.

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5. A switch according to claim 4 in which the logic for snooping the TCP header checks the flag bits within the TCP header and establishes whether any flag other than a PSH flag bit is set.

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6. A switch according to claim 4 in which said means for assigning allocates an increased priority to packets having a flag bit other than PSH set.

7. A switch for the reception and transmission of data packets including control packets and other packets each having a header conforming to the Transport Control Protocol (TCP), said switch including:

5 a multiplicity of ports for receiving and transmitting said packets;

means for allocating a priority to packets within said switch;

10 means for checking flag bits within the header of each of said packets to determine whether a given packet is a control packet; and

means for assigning a priority to said given packet dependent on whether it is a control packet.

15 8. A switch according to claim 7 in which:

the logic for snooping the TCP header establishes whether any flag in said header other than a PSH flag bit is set; and

20 said means for assigning allocates an increased priority to packets having a set flag bit other than said PSH flag bit

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